

Intro.

- A. Have you heard about the man who ate dog food? (Wasn't starving, nor being initiated into a college fraternity.
  - 1. It happened at an elegant house of a physician near Miami.
  - 2. The dog food was served on delicate little crackers with a wedge of imported cheese, bacon chips, and an olive.
  - 3. “*Hors d' oeuvres a la Alop*”, the make & server was a friend just graduated from a gourmet cooking school.
    - a. Decided to put her skills to ~ ultimate test, doctoring up those miserable morsels, placing them on silver tray.
    - b. With an anxious, slight grin, she watched as her preacher friend made them disappear, one after the other!
  - 4. This is a perfect illustration of what goes on in the religious realm!
    - a. Religious teachers offer their food on shiny, well-decorated platters where people really do not know what they are being served (taught).
    - b. **Jer. 5:30-31** warns us to be careful of what we “swallow” spiritually.
    - c. Jesus made some significant observations about false teachers & their teaching in **Mt. 7:15-20**
- B. Recently as I studied, I began to think about what it means when God refers to man as some sort of animal.
  - 1. **Mt. 7:6** - *Do not give what is holy to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine...* (interesting w/n context)
  - 2. Peter (**2 Pet. 2:22**) compared the unfaithful child of God to a sick dog & a pig wallowing in the mire.
  - 3. In **Isa. 56:10** false prophets were referred to as dogs (c. **Phil. 3:18**)
- C. In the lesson text, Jesus uses 4 “animals” to illustrate important truths about false teachers & listeners.

Discuss.**I. WOLVES ARE  $\Rightarrow$  DANGEROUS, vs. 15**

- A. “*Beware*” – *turn the mind to, be attentive* (Strong's). It is a word signaling danger, thus, be on guard.
  - 1. False prophets are more than wrong, they are dangerous! c. **2 Pet. 2:12**
  - 2. In Palestine, wolves are the common natural enemy of sheep, always looking for the stray & vulnerable.
- B. False teachers in church are dangerous because they attack at point of vulnerability – *fellowship relations*.
  - 1. Nature of fellowship is *love, sharing, trust*. (Unthinkable that a dear bro. would teach anything that would deceive our minds, threaten our faith & damn our souls! Surely not our brother!)
  - 2. The relationship of our fellowship in the family of God makes us want to excuse or justify him.
    - a. Must have misunderstood him...He is just trying to make us think...He may be off in a few points, but he sure has a lot of good things to say...We shouldn't throw the baby out with the bath water.
    - b. Allowances must be made for immaturity, ignorance, & those who struggle with doctrinal misunderstandings, but are studying seriously!
    - c. **Beware** – this is not the case with one that teaches a different doctrine and/or divides the church.

**II. FALSE TEACHERS (Wolves) ARE  $\Rightarrow$  DECIETFUL, vs. 15**

- A. When an enemy is obvious, you are on the alert, ready for defense. If posing as a friend,...no defense.
  - 1. In O.T. times, prophets were recognized by their clothing (unrefined, uncomfortable, symbolic, **Mt. 3:4**)
  - 2. Occasionally, those posing as prophets dressed accordingly, as in **Zech. 13:4**
- B. Today, what does a false prophet look like???
- 1. **2 Cor. 11:13-15** offers a slight clue, but little help – as far as appearance goes. *They look like sheep*.
- 2. Masquerading as truth teachers, they creep into congregations undetected. **Jude 4; Gal. 2:4; 2 Tm. 3:13**
  - a. **2 Pet. 2:1-3** *deceptive* or *feigned* is like our English word *plastic*, conveys the idea of being fictitious
  - b. **Eph. 4:14** *slight of men* is from word meaning “cube” or “dice used for gambling” to defraud players
- 3. Mental picture: *False teachers* look like sheep, but sound like wolves.
  - a. That's probably why JW's changed the cover on their *New World Translation* from green to black.
  - b. That is why Mormons spend millions advertising to convince the public that they are just like you.
  - c. Would Sherrill have difficulty recognizing a counterfeit \$20 if blue on oversized paper & my picture?
  - d. Difference in counterfeits & genuine items is usually subtle, not obvious.

**III. WOLVES ARE  $\Rightarrow$  DEADLY, vs 15.**

- A. *Ravenous* is variously translated *extortioners* **Lk. 18:11**
- B. When speaking to an unsuspecting audience, false teachers are “sweet as sugar.”
  - 1. When their false teaching is exposed, they viciously tear their opponents like a trapped animal.
  - 2. Notice **Ac. 20:28-31**

**IV. FALSE TEACHER ARE  $\Rightarrow$  DOOMED, vs. 19.**

- A. Implied in **vs. 19**, and stated explicitly in **vs. 22-23**
- B. A dead or barren tree (re: *false prophets*) is fit for nothing, except fuel for a fire.

**V. In vs. 16-18 & 20, WOLVES ARE  $\Rightarrow$  DISCOVERED.**

- A. Like trees, teachers are known by what they produce, c. **Mt. 12:33-34** **Deut.13:1-4**
  - 1. Just as thorn bushes do not grow grapes, wolves will eventually not look or sound like sheep, c.  $\Rightarrow$
  - 2. We are to be *fruit inspectors* for the Lord, as in **Rev. 2:2**
  - 3. Remember the criterion for determining false teacher is not personality, intellect, eloquence or generosity, but.....**the Word of God, 1 Jn. 4:1**
- B. Interesting note: false teachers typically deplore those who identify them, and refer to them as false teachers, but they have no problem referring to those in opposition to them as “witch-hunters” or “legalists.”

Concl.

- A. Illust.: Gem merchants in ancient China took on apprentices to study the craft of selecting, cutting & selling.
  - 1. A young man approached a master craftsman about becoming his apprentice, & started the next day.
  - 2. 1<sup>st</sup> day, was given a ruby & told to sit in a corner & hold it. Same thing on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, ...for 2 weeks.
  - 3. The apprentice finally complained & asked *WHY?*
  - 4. Without explanation, the craftsman placed a red stone in the youth’s hand, to which he remarked –  
“*That’s not a ruby!*”
  - 5. He had learned to know the authentic from the fake by constant exposure to the real thing!!!
- B. The spiritual application is obvious, **Jn. 8:32**
  - 1. One of the problem many false teachers seem to have deals with the Lord’s invitation, & heaven’s plan of salvation. (They don’t want to “extend the invitation” or summarize salvation’s plan)
  - 2. Jesus does invite you to COME, and He has explained just HOW we can come.